

SECOND REGULAR SESSION

# HOUSE BILL NO. 2128

## 91ST GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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INTRODUCED BY REPRESENTATIVES WILSON (42), HAYWOOD, TROUPE, LOWE, CAMPBELL,  
BLAND, CURLS (Co-sponsors), BOYKINS, THOMPSON, CARNAHAN, JOHNSON (61),  
COPENHAVER AND BOWMAN.

Read 1<sup>st</sup> time March 7, 2002, and 1000 copies ordered printed.

TED WEDEL, Chief Clerk

3831L.02I

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### AN ACT

To repeal section 307.178, RSMo, and to enact in lieu thereof one new section relating to seat belts.

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*Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the state of Missouri, as follows:*

Section A. Section 307.178, RSMo, is repealed and one new section enacted in lieu thereof, to be known as section 307.178, to read as follows:

307.178. 1. As used in this section, the term "passenger car" means every motor vehicle designed for carrying ten persons or less and used for the transportation of persons; except that, the term "passenger car" shall not include motorcycles, motorized bicycles, motor tricycles and trucks with a licensed gross weight of twelve thousand pounds or more.

2. Each driver, except persons employed by the United States Postal Service while performing duties for that federal agency which require the operator to service postal boxes from their vehicles, or which require frequent entry into and exit from their vehicles, and [front seat] passenger, **regardless of whether the passenger is seated in a front or rear seat**, of a passenger car manufactured after January 1, 1968, operated on a street or highway in this state, and persons less than eighteen years of age operating or riding in a truck, as defined in section 301.010, RSMo, on a street or highway of this state shall wear a properly adjusted and fastened safety belt that meets federal National Highway, Transportation and Safety Act requirements; except that, a child less than four years of age shall be protected as required in section 210.104, RSMo. No person shall be stopped, inspected, or detained solely to determine compliance with this subsection. The provisions of this section shall not be applicable to persons who have a

**EXPLANATION — Matter enclosed in bold faced brackets [thus] in this bill is not enacted and is intended to be omitted in the law.**

16 medical reason for failing to have a seat belt fastened about their body, nor shall the provisions  
17 of this section be applicable to persons while operating or riding a motor vehicle being used in  
18 agricultural work-related activities. Noncompliance with this subsection shall not constitute  
19 probable cause for violation of any other provision of law.

20         3. Each driver of a motor vehicle transporting a child four years of age or more, but less  
21 than sixteen years of age, shall secure the child in a properly adjusted and fastened safety belt.

22         4. In any action to recover damages arising out of the ownership, common maintenance  
23 or operation of a motor vehicle, failure to wear a safety belt in violation of this section shall not  
24 be considered evidence of comparative negligence. Failure to wear a safety belt in violation of  
25 this section may be admitted to mitigate damages, but only under the following circumstances:

26         (1) Parties seeking to introduce evidence of the failure to wear a safety belt in violation  
27 of this section must first introduce expert evidence proving that a failure to wear a safety belt  
28 contributed to the injuries claimed by plaintiff;

29         (2) If the evidence supports such a finding, the trier of fact may find that the plaintiff's  
30 failure to wear a safety belt in violation of this section contributed to the plaintiff's claimed  
31 injuries, and may reduce the amount of the plaintiff's recovery by an amount not to exceed one  
32 percent of the damages awarded after any reductions for comparative negligence.

33         5. Each [driver] **person** who violates the provisions of subsection 2 or 3 of this section  
34 is guilty of an infraction for which a fine not to exceed ten dollars may be imposed. All other  
35 provisions of law and court rules to the contrary notwithstanding, no court costs shall be imposed  
36 on any person due to a violation of this section. In no case shall points be assessed against any  
37 person, pursuant to section 302.302, RSMo, for a violation of this section.

38         6. The department of public safety shall initiate and develop a program of public  
39 information to develop understanding of, and ensure compliance with, the provisions of this  
40 section. The department of public safety shall evaluate the effectiveness of this section and shall  
41 include a report of its findings in the annual evaluation report on its highway safety plan that it  
42 submits to NHTSA and FHWA pursuant to 23 U.S.C. 402.

43         7. If there are more persons than there are seat belts in the enclosed area of a motor  
44 vehicle, then the driver and passengers are not in violation of this section.